

April 2017 From the Board Room

North Carolina Public Schools

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The State Board of Education is comprised of the State Treasurer, the Lieutenant Governor and 11 citizens appointed by the Governor. This newsletter highlights the Board's activities on behalf of the 1.5 million public school students in our state and the more than 100,000 educators who provide services to children. You may view all State Board of Education member and advisor information [online](#). To access current and archived versions of From the Boardroom, visit the State Board of Education's [website](#).



Revised English Language Arts Standards Approved; Classroom Implementation in 2018-19

English language arts (ELA) teachers and students will use newly [revised standards](#) in North Carolina public school classrooms beginning in the 2018-19 school year. The State Board of Education approved the revised standards at its April meeting following two months of review. The revisions were endorsed by the following state-level groups: NC Chamber, BEST NC, the NC Association of School Administrators, the NC School Boards Association, the NC Large District Consortium and HIRE Standards. Also, Mission:

Readiness, an organization of more than 650 retired admirals and generals endorsed the revisions.

Revisions were a compilation of work completed by a Data Review Committee that reviewed information provided through ELA teacher focus groups, educator and community surveys and the work of the Academic Standards Review Commission. Writing teams of ELA teachers, district leaders and professors from North Carolina colleges and universities used the Data Review Committee's recommendations to create three different drafts, each responsive to follow-up feedback. This work has taken approximately a full year to complete.

Key improvements to the standards include a new format, a strong emphasis on the writing process, language continuums and more attention to Reading Standard 10. Here's how the change breaks down: 125 standards had major changes; 45 standards had a minor change; 179 standards remained the same; eight standards were removed; one new standard was included; 67 standards had examples removed with no other change; and 38 standards were integrated into others.

Over the next six months, the Department's English language arts staff will develop an Implementation Kit to be available in January 2018 to provide:

- standards in the new format;
- five lessons per grade level;
- a text selection guide;
- revised "40 Ways to Read like a Detective" cards;
- an Independent Sustained Reading Guide;
- Language Continuum Guides;
- parent resources; and
- an Integrating Standards and Aligning ELA Instruction Module.

Training will be held this fall to introduce the [new standards](#) and their format.



Annual Indian Education Report Highlights Challenges, Successes

North Carolina is home to eight Indian tribes, mostly clustered in 16 counties in eastern North Carolina with the exception of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee located in far western North Carolina.

Students identified within these eight tribal groups are served through federal Title VI supplemental funds as well as through the regular funding provided by the State of North Carolina. While American Indian students continue to post small improvements in the percentage of students reading and doing mathematics at or

above grade level, performance disparities continue among racial groups.

The annual report to the State Board of Education from the State Advisory Council on Indian Education, *Shining a Light on the Seventh Generation: The State of Education of American Indian Students in NC*, provided disaggregated student performance data for each school district receiving the Title VI funds and recommendations for improvement. Recommendations include:

- requiring low-performing districts and schools that enroll American Indian students to create goals and activities that specifically address increasing their achievement as a part of state-required school improvement plans;
- ensuring that all NC Department of Public Instruction staff who support districts and schools with American Indian populations have awareness of American Indian tribes in North Carolina including their history and culture and of instructional resources to support assistance to American Indian students;
- widely disseminating the annual SACIE report; and
- ensuring that North Carolina's Consolidated Plan under the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* considers the academic and non-academic needs of American Indian students.

School-Based Mental Health Policy Approved

After several months of discussion, the State Board of Education approved a new [School-Based Mental Health Initiative policy](#) to help address mental health concerns in local schools and districts. The new policy was developed after a report and recommendations were presented to the Board by the NC School Mental Health Initiative, a multi-disciplinary interagency partnership with broad representation from education, mental health service providers, lawyers, advocates, university faculty and parents.

The new policy focuses on universal prevention of mental health concerns; early intervention; processes for referral, treatment and re-entry; and stakeholder engagement. Policies and activities to promote a socially and emotionally healthy school environment for all students and staff, as well as improved access and connections to community-based services for students and their families, are key components of this new policy.

To begin implementing this policy, school districts in 2017-18 will develop a plan for assessing and improving the effectiveness of existing supports for mental health and substance use supports for students. This could include staff training. In the 2018-19 school year, the districts' plan implementation and three-year review cycle begins, and the NC Department of Public Instruction will provide school mental health training and technical assistance to districts.



NC Check-Ins Assessment Model Receives High Marks from Local Educators

For the past two school years, elementary and middle schools in North Carolina have been studying NC Check-ins, a new approach to assess student learning in mathematics and English language arts. In 2016-17, 165 schools were selected to use the Mathematics Check-Ins and 110 used the English language arts version. There also were an additional 156 schools volunteering to use the math

Check-Ins and 76 volunteered to use the English language arts Check-Ins.

This new approach provides three shorter assessments spread across the school year and an end-of-grade assessment at the end of the year. For many districts, the shorter assessments are replacing local benchmark assessments that districts have been giving for a number of years. By taking this approach, teachers receive consistent feedback on student progress across the year so they can make adjustments that may be helpful to student learning.

In a survey of school district staff, slightly more than 68 percent of respondents said that participation in NC Check-Ins should be a local option (not state required). Slightly fewer than 63 percent of respondents said that the Check-Ins should be available for online administration. More than 70 percent of participating schools said that their district did not use other benchmark testing alongside the NC Check-ins, but nearly 30 percent did both.

Ryan McCreary, principal at Jenkins Elementary School in Hickory, told the State Board of Education that the NC Check-Ins helped ensure appropriate pacing, provided support for proper rigor and format for assessment, and provided access to disaggregated data to support decision-making. McCreary praised NCDPI's support materials in the model. He noted that the Check-Ins provided a good opportunity to address equity for students and tools to close achievement gaps.

NCDPI Accountability staff recommended that NC Check-Ins be expanded in school years 2017-18 (add grades 5 and 7 in English language arts and grades 4 and 6 in mathematics) and in 2018-19 (add

grades 4 and 8 in English language arts and grades 3 and 7 in mathematics). Also, staff recommended that the NC Check-Ins be available online and in paper-and-pencil formats, and that schools be discouraged from administering additional benchmark assessments alongside the NC Check-Ins to trim time spent on testing.



NCSU and UNC are Collaborating on Innovative Lateral Entry Teacher Preparation

North Carolina State University's and at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's colleges of education have been working together to address teacher effectiveness and attrition by providing lateral entry teachers with a high-quality, research-based, online competency-based preparation program. This new model of collaboration and outreach is intended to serve some of the approximately 4,300 lateral entry teachers across the state.

Last year, 850 lateral entry teachers were located in the NCSU/UNC service area surrounding the Triangle area. This opportunity will become available for about 50 lateral entry teachers beginning in the 2018-19 academic year and is anticipated to be comparably priced with NCSU's current lateral entry program, which costs approximately \$4,200 per teacher.

Once it is operational, the universities will evaluate the program based on a variety of measures including teacher retention, teacher effectiveness, time to completion, edTPA results, and the satisfaction of participating lateral entry teachers.

SBE Highlights: A [checklist](#) of Board actions is posted every month at the conclusion of the meeting. The State Board of Education's next meeting will be held May 2 - 4 (includes a planning and work session) in the 7th Floor Board Room, Education Building, 301 N. Wilmington Street, Raleigh, NC. Board materials will be available [online](#) by clicking on the Meetings tab.



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